Listen to our podcast about the Louisiana Purchase.

Thomas Jefferson was elected President in 1800. At that time, France claimed a large area of land west of the Mississippi River. The French called this land Louisiana. France also controlled the port city of New Orleans

Jefferson sent representatives to France to convince the French government to let the United States ships use the port of New Orleans. To his surprise, the French ruler, Napoleon Bonaparte, offered to sell all of Louisiana to the US.

Jefferson quickly accepted the offer. The purchase of this land in 1803 added about 800,000 square miles to the US. The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country.

President Jefferson wanted to know about the land west of the Mississippi River. He sent a group of soldiers led b y Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore it. Jefferson asked them to explore the Missouri and Columbia Rivers and to look for a water route to the Pacific Ocean he also told them to gather information about the geography, plants, animals, climate, and peoples of the West.

In 1804 Lewis and Clark set out from ST. Louis, Missouri. Their group was called the corps of Discovery. A corps is a team of people working together. More than 30 people, mostly soldiers, joined Lewis and Clark on their dangerous journey. A Shoshone woman named Sacagawea later joined the team.

The corps traveled up the Missouri River, over the rocky mountains, and down the Columbia river to the pacific ocean. It then returned to st. Louis in September 1806 after traveling about 8000 miles. The explorers had survived hunger, bear attacks, and rushing rivers.

Lewis and Clark completed the tasks Jefferson had given them. They took detailed notes about the people, wildlife, and land in their journals. Clark made a map of the West that included mountains and rivers that had never been shown on a map.

Lewis and clark learned that there was no direct water routes to the pacific ocean. They had shown, however that it was possible to cross the continent through passes in the rocky mountains with western native Americans. These discoveries created interest in the west and helped future pioneers and traders.

Jefferson bought the Louisiana territory and this territory became part of the United States.

Stay tuned to our next podcast

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